

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A wafer processing apparatus including a mini-environment portion having a chamber therein and configured to transfer a wafer between a clean box having a housing with an opening configured to be closed by a lid to house the wafer in the housing and the chamber, wherein the housing has a tab extending outside from the opening of the clean box around an entire perimeter of the opening, said apparatus comprising:

a first opening portion formed on a wall of the chamber, for communicating with an outside of the chamber, the wall opposing the opening of the clean box which allows loading or unloading the wafer between the clean box and the chamber,

wherein when the wafer transferring operation is performed, the clean box is fixed to overlap the tab of the clean box over an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed with a first clearance formed around the entire perimeter of said first opening portion,

wherein an inside peripheral edge of the tab is positioned inside an area of said first opening portion to make air flow along the surface of the tab,

and wherein the first clearance is defined by a predetermined constant distance along an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box between a surface of the tab and the outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising a door capable of closing said first opening portion when the wafer is not transferred and opening the first opening portion when the wafer is transferred, wherein when the lid held by the door has been inserted into said first opening portion to close said first

opening portion until the door has closed said first opening portion, a second clearance is formed between the door and a perimeter of said first opening portion, the second clearance communicating with the first clearance,

wherein an inside of the chamber is capable of communicating with an outside of the chamber through the first and second clearances.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said second clearance is capable of communicating with the first clearance to form a gas flow path from the chamber to the outside of the chamber.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): A wafer processing apparatus including a mini-environment portion having a chamber therein and configured to transfer a wafer between a clean box having a housing with an opening configured to be closed by a lid to house the wafer in the housing and the chamber, wherein the housing has a tab extending outside from the opening of the clean box around an entire perimeter of the opening, said apparatus comprising:

a first opening portion formed on a wall of the chamber, for communicating with an outside of the chamber, the wall opposing to the opening of the clean box which allows loading or unloading the wafer between the clean box and the chamber; and

a door configured to close said first opening portion when the wafer is not transferred and opening the first opening portion when the wafer is transferred,

wherein when the wafer transferring operation is performed, the clean box is fixed to overlap the tab of the clean box with an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed with a first clearance formed at the perimeter of said first opening portion,

wherein an inside peripheral edge of the tab is positioned inside an area of said first opening portion to make air flow along the surface of the tab,

wherein the first clearance is defined by a predetermined constant distance along an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box between a surface of the tab and the outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed;

wherein when the lid held by the door has been inserted into said first opening portion to close said first opening portion until the door has closed said first opening portion, a second clearance is formed between the door and a perimeter of said first opening portion, the second clearance communicating with the first clearance,

and wherein an inside of the chamber is capable of communicating with an outside of the chamber through the first and second clearances.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first clearance extends between the tab and ~~[[a]]~~ the wall on which said first opening portion is formed in a direction of the wall on which said first opening portion is formed.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the first clearance extends in a direction perpendicular to the wall on which the first opening portion is formed.

Claims 7-8 (Canceled).

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the second clearance extends within said first opening portion around an entire perimeter of said first opening portion along a direction in which said door opens.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the second clearance extends within said first opening portion around an entire perimeter of said first opening portion along a direction in which said door opens.